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P. Baird  
REMARKS

ON

# HÆMORRHÆA PETECHIALIS.

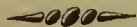
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READ BEFORE THE IPSWICH MEDICAL SOCIETY.

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GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, AND PHYSICIAN  
TO THE IPSWICH DISPENSARY.



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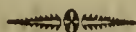
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## REMARKS ON HÆMORRHÆA PETECHIALIS.

By ANDREW WOOD BAIRD, M. D.



THE disease which is denominated Hæmorrhæa Petechialis on its being first described, was considered of the same nature as Scorbutus, only modified by its occurrence on land, and hence it acquired the term Land-scurvy. This opinion long swayed the minds of medical men and regulated their practice, though strict and accurate investigation of the phenomena would necessarily have produced the conviction of its being founded on error, since this disease arises from causes, and under circumstances differing toto cœlo from those which give origin to the Sea-scurvy, and the remedies which seldom fail in the cure of the last mentioned disease, are in the treatment of this, of not the least avail. Accordingly after a time, this view of the nature of Hæmorrhæa Petechialis was abandoned; when it became the doctrine of the schools and has so continued till near the present time, that great general debility essentially constitutes this disease. Now though I admit that this last theory is strictly applicable to, and explanatory of, some of the cases of Hæmorrhæa Petechialis, yet I contend that in the very great majority of them there is no evidence of *real* debility being present; and by a reference to the habit of body in which the disease occurs, the suddenness of the attack, the effects of the *juvantia* and *lædentia*, together with the consideration of the morbid appearances on the dissection of those cases which have proved fatal, unless warped by pre-conceived



theory, we should argue the reverse of debility being their cause, and pronounce them to depend on a plethora of the sanguiferous system. I would then consider that there are two varieties of Hæmorrhæa Petechialis, distinct in their nature, arising from opposite causes, and requiring very opposite methods of cure. The one variety has its origin in great general debility; by which a colliquative state of the blood, weakness of the coats of the blood-vessels, rupture, and consequent hæmorrhagy take place: the other variety in a plethora of the sanguiferous system, causing distension and rupture of blood-vessels, together with hæmorrhagy. Indeed this disease may be considered analogous to any one of those of the order of Hæmorrhagiæ, such as Epistaxis, Hæmoptysis, Hæmatemesis, or Mænorragia, certain cases of which are passive and others active. The history of that variety which arises from debility is too well known to require any comment here; it ought however to be borne in recollection, that the cases are comparatively rare and occur principally in the latter stages of protracted continued fever. As tending to illustrate the other variety to which I would more immediately direct your attention, I will take the liberty of citing a case which came under my observation in the practice of my friend Mr. Wood of Edinburgh. I shall narrate the case from notes which I took at the time of its occurrence. The Patient was a girl, *fourteen years of age, an inmate of the Merchant Maiden Hospital*, of a full habit of body, and of the sanguineo-phlegmatic temperament. On the Saturday evening a small black spot was observed on her under lip, which at the time, was supposed to be merely a stain of ink, but the next morning a few similar spots being conspicuous on the different parts of her body, Mr. Wood was requested to visit her. On examination these spots proved to be petechiæ and vibices; there was a trifling hæmorrhage from the gums and fauces; the

functions were quite natural, and she made no complaint. Aperient medicine, the infusion of roses with sulphuric acid, low diet and confinement within doors, were directed. The next day Monday, on being visited she was sitting up, and still made no complaint, but as her body was more covered with petechiæ, confinement to bed and the continuance of the prescription of the day before were ordered. On the Tuesday morning the case suddenly assumed a very alarming aspect:—as she was getting out of bed about three o'clock she fell to the ground in a state of insensibility, and when visited shortly afterwards was found in a state of coma, the pupils were dilated and devoid of contractility on the application of their natural stimulus, or the light of a candle brought close to them; stertorous breathing, face pale and features collapsed, pulse slow and weak, slight vomiting, and the extremities much convulsed. The whole of the body was now covered with petechiæ, vibices and ecchymoses, and there was a continuance of the hæmorrhagy. During the whole of Tuesday the symptoms detailed were present without change, and she died the same evening.

SECTIO CADAVERIS. On removing the upper part of the Cranium we found the veins of the brain particularly turgid, and a large coagulum of blood about two ounces in weight, covering the right hemisphere of the brain, and part of which was in a pulpy and apparently disorganized state. By farther dissection the right lateral ventricle came into view, filled with coagulated blood, of which there was also a small quantity at the base of the cranium. The left side of the brain was perfectly sound. The other viscera were of their natural appearance, the lungs, liver, and spleen, having been particularly examined; the petechiæ were limited to the skin, the mucous and fibrous tissues, not at all appearing in the parenchymatous substance of the different viscera.



The whole of the symptoms in cases of this variety of *Hæmorrhæa Petechialis*, indicate that the sanguineous congestion takes place in the veins; such as the absence of true inflammatory excitement, the color of the blood effused, and the extremely turgid state of the veins found on dissection. It is to Dr. Armstrong that the profession is so much indebted for having called their attention to that derangement of the circulation occasioned by congestion of blood in the venous system and the symptoms dependant thereon. The symptom of indirect debility that occurs in consequence of the impeded and interrupted circulation of blood in the veins, has been the fruitful cause of much mischief in this as well as in many other diseases of the same class. In some of the cases of this variety of *Hæmorrhæa Petechialis*, the powers of the system being strong, nature attempts the relief of the congestion of the veins, and the consequence is, either the simple excited state of the arteries or true inflammatory appearances, present themselves. But more generally there is the entire absence of inflammatory excitement, and indirect debility occurs. This is to be contra-distinguished from direct debility by the peculiar habit of body in which the case occurs, the mode of attack, and the effect of remedies. It appears to me indeed there can be no difficulty as regards the diagnostic marks, to even the most common observer. The petechiæ, vibices, ecchymoses and hæmorrhagy, which occur in cases of this variety, arise from the plethora of the venous system causing a rupture of the coats of the veins. Dr. Bateman and others suppose some local obstruction to be the cause of the general plethora, I believe the reverse; and that they have substituted effect for cause. When there is a general derangement of either of the circulating systems, arterial or venous, we know that a determination to some one part (generally the weakest) more than another, takes place. Hence we

account in this disease for the local affection and effusions. These happen in very different parts of the system, as the uterus, stomach, lungs, liver, and spleen; but I find only one other case on record, where the hæmorrhagy took place on the brain as in the case I have detailed. Dr. Abercrombie in a valuable paper on the Pathology of the Diseases of the Head, has well described the variety of apoplexy which was present in this case; and has completely refuted the notion of its being a tonic, or what some term nervous, apoplexy, which the advocates for that bugbear of our science, debility, would argue; and the dissection in this case tends admirably to support his views. The treatment of this variety of Hæmorrhæa Petechialis I need not particularly enlarge on, for true it is that the knowledge of the nature of a disease is half its cure; and if the pathology I have stated be correct, it necessarily consists in depleting, to remove the plethora, and thus to excite the natural action of the blood-vessels. In severe cases the more powerful means will be required, venesection, purgatives, refrigerants and counter-irritation to the part or parts particularly affected; whereas when the disease is mild, purgatives with refrigerents alone will suffice.

*Ipswich, July 8th, 1826.*



